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1965/05/17

CLARK M. CLIFFORD
815 CONNECTICUT AVENUE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20006

May 17, 1965

The President
The White House

Dear Mr. President:

I am returning herewith the letter of the Director of Central Intelligence, dated May 8, 1965, together with enclosures.

I wish to make one major point.

I believe our ground forces in South Vietnam should be kept to a minimum, consistent with the protection of our installations and property in that country. My concern is that a substantial buildup of U. S. ground troops would be construed by the Communists, and by the world, as a determination on our part to win the war on the ground.

This could be a quagmire. It could turn into an open end commitment on our part that would take more and more ground troops, without a realistic hope of ultimate victory.

I do not think the situation is comparable to Korea. The political posture of the parties involved, and the physical conditions, including terrain, are entirely different.

I continue to believe that the constant probing of every avenue leading to a possible settlement will ultimately be fruitful. It won't be what we want, but we can learn to live with it.

Respectfully yours,

Clark

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